
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	325 D Street, SE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	September 18, 2014	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Case Number:	14-536	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Sarah VanLandingham	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
	Frances McMillen	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Applicants James and Heather Liddell with plans prepared by Timothy Liddell request concept review for a side and rear addition, new roof deck, and new basement entrance.

Property Description

325 D Street, SE is a detached two-story, porch-front frame house. It was built before permits were required in the 1870s and was altered in 1887 to change the roof form and add the front porch. Two additions (referred to as structures “B” and “C” in the plans; the original portion of the house is identified as “A”) are located to the side and rear of the building.

The house sits up from street level on a berm along with the houses to the west. To the east, the grade gradually falls off to meet the street. The berm is supported by a stone retaining wall.

The façade has been clad in formstone and none of the original siding remains. The porch is supported by three red-brick piers. Two second floor two-over-two windows align with a two-over-two window and door on the first floor. There are windows on the west side of the building but not on the east side along the property line.

Proposal

The proposal calls for demolishing two small additions at the rear and side of the building. A new side addition set back from the face of the building 4’ would connect it to the neighboring rowhouse at 323 D Street SE. The new footprint requires removing some wall sections of the main house.

The façade would be restored with wood siding and reconstruction of the porch in a more historically accurate design. The addition will be clad in the same material but have one-over-one windows. New window openings will be added to the east side of the building and one-over-one windows will be installed. A new roof deck and stair access structure will be added at the rear above the new addition.

The proposal also calls for adding a basement apartment to be accessed through a berm cut on D Street. New windows will be installed on the west side of the front plane of the porch and a new door will be located on the east side. These changes are made to accommodate an accessible basement apartment.

Evaluation

The proposal to remove the formstone and non-original siding and rebuild the porch is consistent with the purposes of the preservation act as it will return the house to a more historically-accurate condition.

While the intention to keep much of the original structure (“A”) is on the right track, retaining more of the original fabric especially along the rear wall of this portion of the building should be studied. Since both structure “A” and structure “B” have been re-clad, it is difficult to date them from the exterior. Structure “B” may date to as early as 1904 when Sanborn maps show a structure in this area. However, while “A” appears to remain in generally good structural condition, “B” shows a level of deterioration, including bowing walls and a lack of interior and exterior details, that provides a justification for its removal. The applicants have indicated that they initially tried to incorporate the existing structure into the new addition but the condition prohibited this kind of alteration. The existing structure “C” is more akin to a pergola than an addition to the main house and its demolition does not raise preservation concerns.

The unusually large side yard and generous lot size can accommodate a side addition of this type. The proposed addition is set back sufficiently to allow the original form of the building to continue to read as it did historically. The design is aesthetically compatible with the main house but is differentiated by and made deferential through the fenestration, set back, and simple cornice.

Sightline studies indicate the proposed roof deck will not be visible from public space but final approval should be contingent on a field mock-up to confirm this. The plan to introduce new window openings to the east side of the house will not significantly alter the character of the historic building, however, moving the front two windows a few feet to the rear is recommended to maintain the historic appearance of this elevation from the street.

The proposal to cut through the berm is incompatible with the historic district and inconsistent with the historic preservation act. Should an entrance of this type be deemed necessary, it should be designed to be as subtle as possible so that the front door still visually reads as the main entrance. The impact of the berm cut would be alleviated somewhat by the sloping grade to the east of the property. The existing D Street retaining wall terminates at the edge of the property line of the subject house. Reducing the height of the proposed retaining wall to the east of the new entrance would help to further mitigate the impact. The applicants have proposed some variations on the basement entrance including a version where the basement door is recessed slightly to reinforce the primacy of the main entrance above.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept of the side and rear additions and façade restoration compatible with the historic district and consistent with the preservation act with the following conditions:

- 1) the applicant should study retaining more of the historic fabric of the original structure,*
- 2) study moving the front-most new windows in the east wall toward the rear,*
- 3) install a mock-up once construction of the addition is underway to test for visibility of the proposed roof deck, and*
- 4) the applicants should work with HPO staff on final selection of materials and façade details.*

The HPO recommends the Board find the concept of the basement entrance to be incompatible with the Capitol Hill historic district and inconsistent with the preservation act.